Search Strategies & “Booleanception”

Topic: Outcomes reporting for registered nurses (RNs)
Searches for all articles containing *either* ‘registered nurse’ *or* ‘RN’ *and* all articles containing ‘outcomes’, irrespective of the first two terms or their relationship.

Using OR –

*Synonyms (teenagers OR adolescents)
*Acronyms (registered nurse OR RN)
*Jargon (epi OR epinephrine)
Because Boolean logic has an order, the AND connection is searched first and the connected terms are mutually exclusive.

The results listing is smaller (33,623 vs. 14,256) because CINAHL is searching for all articles containing only outcomes AND registered nurse, as well as all articles containing RN.
Let’s create a compartmentalized search...

I know I want either all articles containing ‘outcomes’ and ‘RN’ OR all articles containing ‘outcomes’ and ‘registered nurse’.

So, I can include Boolean operators *within* the search boxes to use with the databases drop-down operators.

But, how can you replicate this search a bit more simply...
Like a math problem. Databases will work in an instructed order. If a Boolean operator appears within the search box or, like a formula, within parentheses, the database will “solve” that first.

Let’s apply this approach to MEDLINE...
Search Results: 1 - 10 of 2,998

1. Economic evaluation of registered nurse tenure on nursing home resident care.

2. Promoting Trust in the Registered Nurse Role.

3. Concurrent and lagged effects of RN nurse staffing and staffing on unit-acquired pressure ulcers.

4. Longitudinal Association of Registered Nurse National Nursing Specialty Certification and Patient Falls in Acute Care Hospitals.
In MEDLINE, I also have the option of searching through Medical Subject Heading (MeSH) terms... This is important b/c these terms are also compatible with PubMed.
By clicking on a MeSH term in the article page, I can populate a new search.

A subject search functions differently than a keyword search, but they’re somewhat reciprocal... Some results from your keyword search will show up in a subject search, and vice versa.

You can choose to enter your own MeSH terms, using any of the M-fields. But a word of caution, the terms used are already established.